

*Above: a school of crappies as seen on sonar.*

Lakes managed by the DNR Waterville Area Fisheries range from deep, stable lakes to prairie potholes - and provide a true variety of fishing opportunity for anglers. Waterville Fisheries staff follow strategic lake management plans, conducting rotating lake surveys to monitor fish populations in Le Sueur, Blue Earth, Faribault, Waseca, Steele, Dodge, Freeborn, Mower, and Rice counties in southern Minnesota.

The data provided here show a breakdown of fish caught during sampling in 2022, 2023, and 2024 for selected species, by size.

### **Bluegill and crappie**

Many small lakes in the area hold large numbers of mid-sized Bluegills. Anglers looking for numbers should check out lakes such as St. Olaf or Clear Lake in Le Sueur County. Anglers looking for larger fish should head to lakes with lower Bluegill numbers such as Roberds Lake, Lake Washington, or German Lake.

The daily limit for sunfish at Lake Mazaska is 5 and the daily limit at Lake Washington and Shields Lake is 10. Please release big Bluegills (greater than 9 inches), they ensure quality size and take many years to replace.

Almost all area lakes offer decent crappie fishing. For numbers of crappie try West Jefferson, East Jefferson, or Clear Lake in Waseca County. Quality crappies can be found in good numbers at lakes such as Lake Washington, Madison Lake, or German Lake. For a true giant try your luck at a shallow, fertile lake like Duck, Lura, or Hunt.

### **Yellow Perch**

Large Yellow Perch are typically associated with large, shallow "Walleye lakes" and can be tough to come by in southern Minnesota. However, some area lakes do offer quality Yellow Perch including German Lake and Horseshoe Lake. Freeborn Lake and Lake Geneva are managed for Yellow Perch (and Northern Pike) and should provide good Yellow Perch fishing this winter.

### **Walleye**

Traditional Mankato area favorites Madison Lake and Lake Washington have healthy Walleye populations along with Lake Tetonka and Fox Lake. Overlooked options may include Fountain Lake or Clear Lake in Waseca County. Be aware that many small, shallow lakes used as Walleye rearing ponds suffered winter kill in 2022-2023 and may not provide fishing until fall or winter in 2025. Lakes that had winterkill include Lake Henry, Lake Elysian, Eagle Lake, and Cody Lake – and potentially others.

### **Northern Pike**

Northern Pike numbers in most lakes are in the range considered desirable by anglers and managers alike. Few lakes in the area suffer from the "hammerhandle" problem common in other parts of the state. Northern Pike over 24 inches can be found at many lakes including Duck Lake, Fountain Lake, and Clear Lake in Le Sueur County.

Waterville area lakes fall under the Southern Zone Northern Pike regulations. St. Olaf Lake near New Richland has a 30 inch minimum size limit.

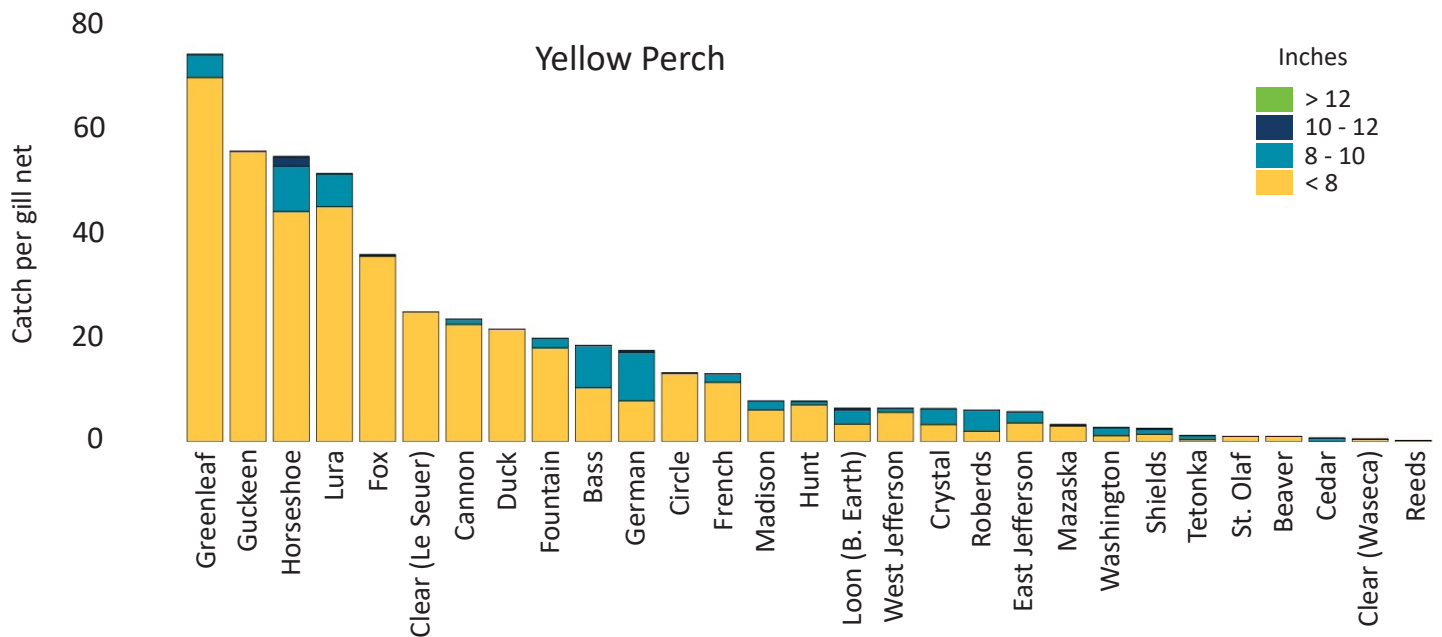
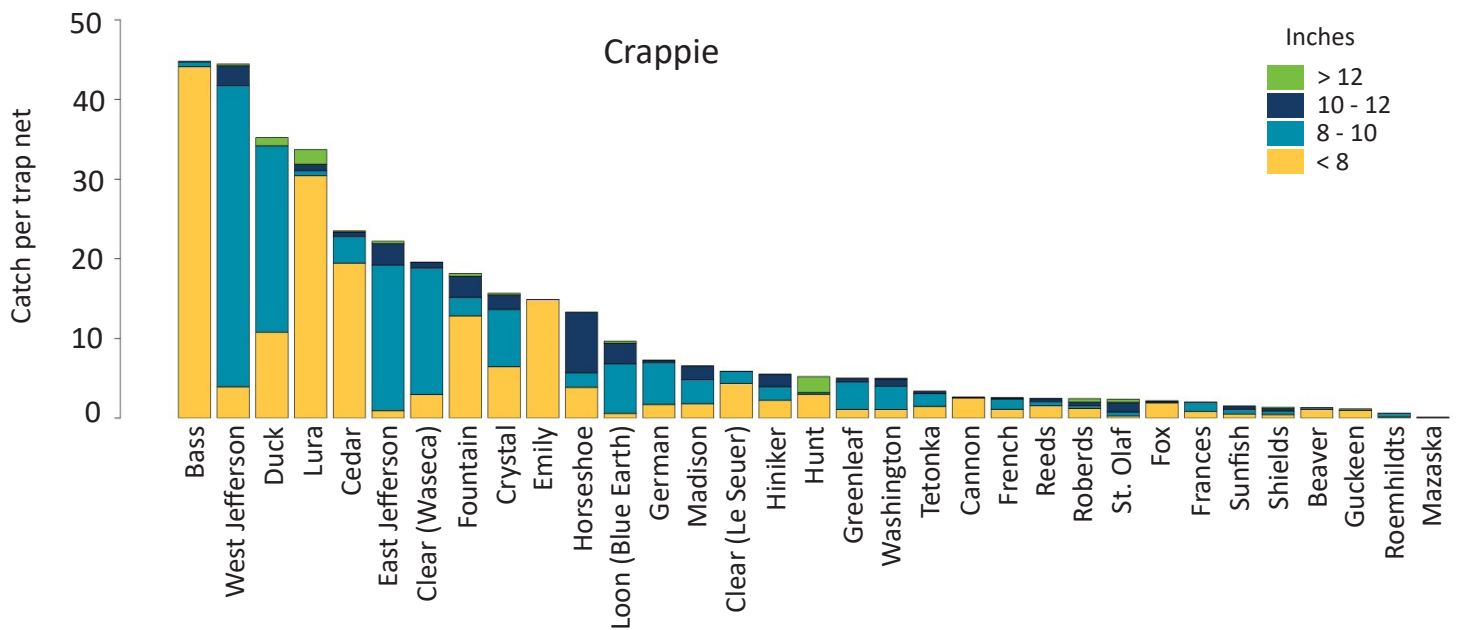
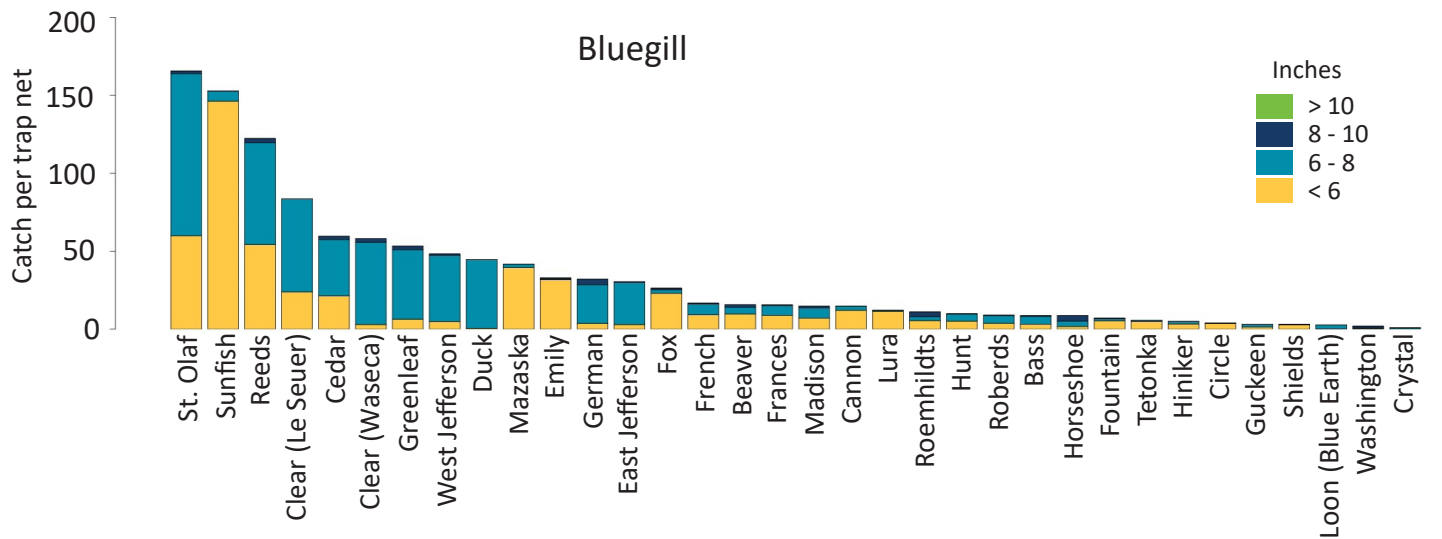
### **Largemouth Bass**

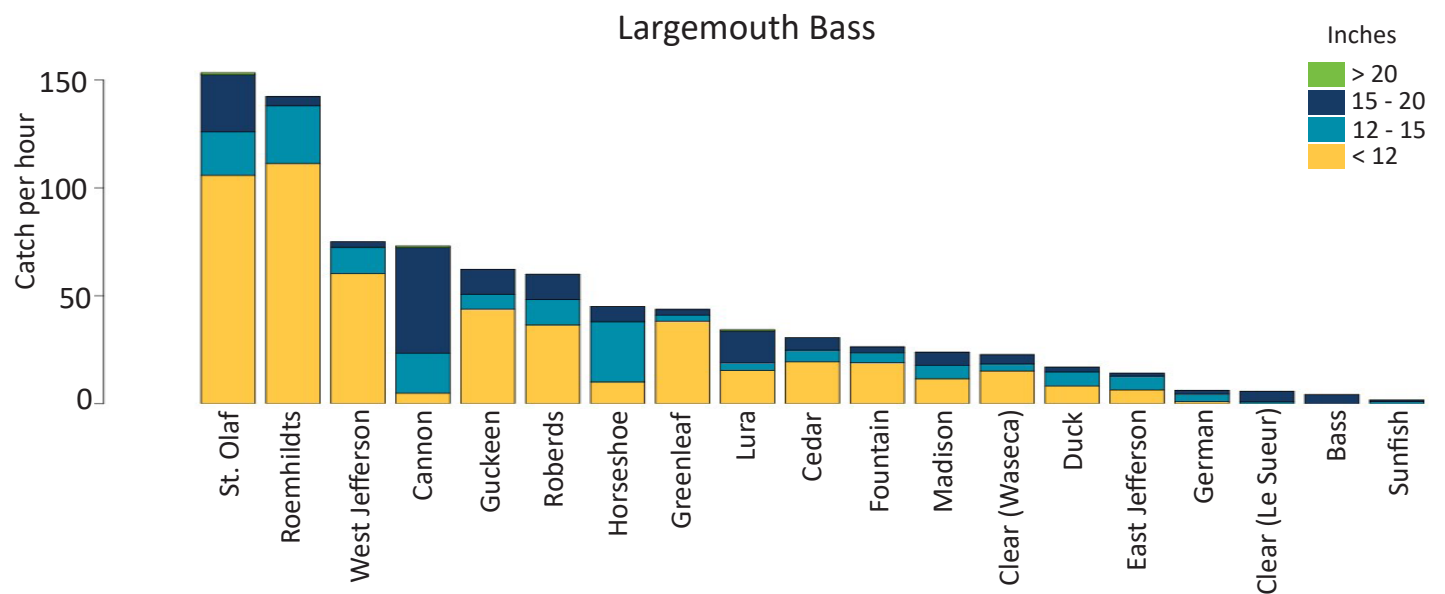
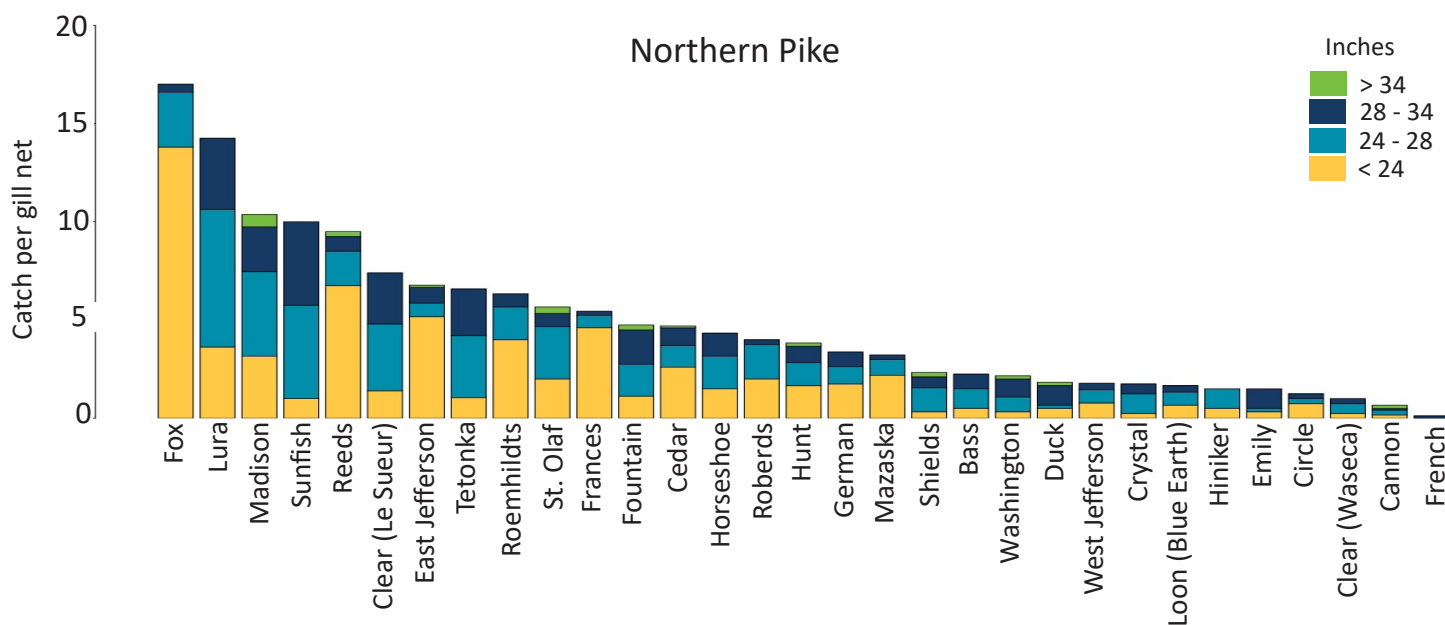
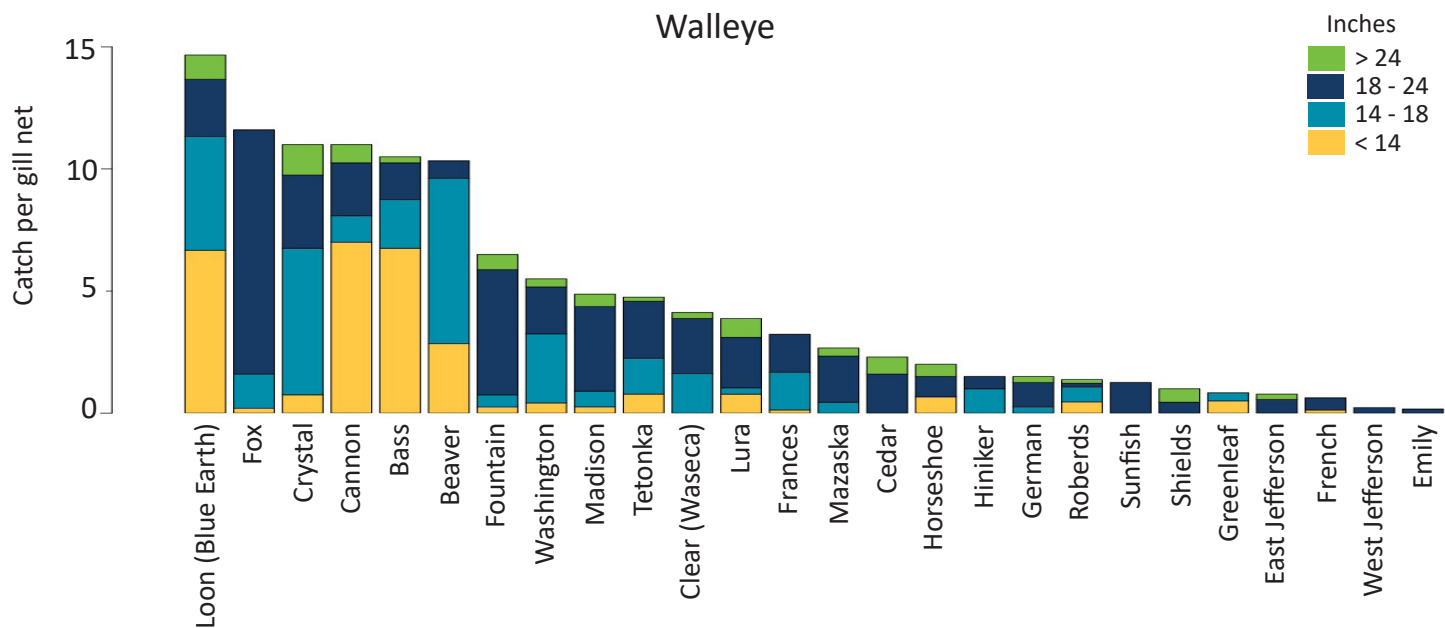
For fast action anglers should check out lakes with high bass numbers such as Lake Frances or Clear Lake in Waseca County. Lakes with low to medium densities of bass such as Cannon Lake, Cedar Lake, and Lake Tetonka often offer the best crack at fish topping the 20 inch mark. Clear Lake in Waseca has a no kill regulation for Largemouth Bass.

### **Catfish**

The Minnesota River is the best bet for Channel Catfish and Flathead Catfish in the Waterville area. The stretch from Courtland to Henderson holds a variety of catfish habitat. The Le Sueur and Blue Earth rivers are also excellent choices for channel catfish. If you prefer to chase Channel Catfish in lakes try Roberds Lake, Lake Tetonka, or Cannon Lake.

*(More species on back page)*





## Bullheads

Bullheads remain a popular target for Waterville area anglers. We field many calls each year asking where to go for good bullhead fishing. All Waterville Area lakes have bullheads, the graph at the right shows the lakes with the highest net catches. Most bullheads sampled are Black Bullheads.

## Muskellunge

French Lake, near Faribault, is the only muskie lake in the Waterville area. Recent sampling shows a population of about 200 adult muskies in the lake, or 1 fish for every 4 acres of water. French Lake muskies average 40 inches and fish over 50 inches are a real possibility.

## Trout

A few options exist for those seeking trout in the Waterville area. Rainbow Trout are stocked every spring at St. Peter AMA and in Wolf Creek within the city of Austin. Rainbow Trout were available to ice anglers at Hiniker Pond in 2024 and hopefully will be again in 2025.

If you prefer to fish moving water, check out Rice Creek, near Dundas, for Brook Trout. Rice Creek is accessible to anglers via an angling easement. To learn more about angling easements and trout fishing in general, see DNR's trout stream webpage <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing/trout/index.html>

For more information on these lakes, and more, visit LakeFinder on the MN DNR website. <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/index.html>

### Survey year

2022: Madison, Duck, Cedar, Crystal, Loon, Washington, Reeds, St. Olaf, Frances, Roemhildts, Mazaska.

2023: Lura, Emily, Hiniker, Hunt, Tetonka, Cannon, French, Roberds, Fox, Sunfish, Shields, Beaver, Circle.

2024: Bass, West Jefferson, East Jefferson, Clear (Waseca County), Fountain, Horseshoe, German, Clear (Le Sueur County), Greenleaf, Guckeen.

